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Whitridge, F. W.

To the employees of the Third Avenue System

New York

1916

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MASTER NEGATIVE #

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To the employees of the Third Avenue System

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Box 40

Gift of the President

New York, October 5th, 1916.

TO THE EMPLOYEES OF THE THIRD AVENUE SYSTEM:-

Some of you are saying that you do not understand the relations of this Company to the Union, that is, to the Amalgamated Society of Street and Electrical Railway Employees of the United States of America and you think that that organization should be recognized by me. I will try and make the situation plain to you.

When I came here I thought and said it was none of my business what societies the men belonged to, whether they were unions, political clubs or churches, and I supposed that the Union was, as some of you explained to me, a society which "succored the sick, buried the dead and carried God's comforts into the home," whatever that meant.

I found, however, that there was no way of finding out how many sick the Union succored, nor how many dead it buried or what the comforts carried into the homes were. In addition, I found very soon that the one apparent purpose of the Union was to foment enmity toward the corporation and the belief that the relations of the men and the Company were necessarily hostile.

I had always supposed, as I do still, that the interests of the men and of the Company were identical so long as the latter did its duty, and I have raised the wages five times since 1908. In pursuance of this hostile relation I found the Union doing everything in its power to prevent men from joining the Benefit Association, which, since it was founded by me, has distributed to 9,342 of the men $96,111.25 in sick benefits, and which founded an insurance

scheme by which the families of fifty-eight men, who died, have received a Thousand Dollars each and a small number of old men are enjoying pensions.

I have also found that the Union is unincorporated, yet "to recognize" the Union means that I am expected to make a contract with it which would destroy discipline, and transfer to it some of the companies powers but the Union cannot be sued, does not know the nature of a contract and is not straight enough to be willing to keep a contract it has made. I also found that it has never published its accounts nor made any statement in respect to them. I say to you that no honest man can take such an attitude, and I have said to the faces of many of you "that any man who took his brother's money and was not at all times prepared to say where it was or what he had done with it was either a fool or a knave, and was probably both." At the same time I said to you that your attitude toward the Company was entirely perverted and that you allowed yourself to be "misled by men who had no more brains than a canary."

These views have been strengthened by my recent experience.

You made a solemn contract with the company which was underwritten by the Mayor and certain other persons, and at the first opportunity you broke it without even alleging any reasons. You have had for the last week or ten days meetings every day at which your leaders have made misstatements of facts, so false that they can only be termed outrageous lies and so foolish in many cases that little children could hardly be deceived by them. Those precious leaders say you can stay out all winter; they do not say they get $3.00 a day upwards from the Union while you are silly enough to stay out.

I found also that the Union is responsible for the most cruel intimidation. Many of you struck because you were compelled to strike. Some of you have said to me personally that you did not know why you struck and that you wished you had not but were now afraid to come back, and within the week one man who had thought of coming back was so wrought up by what he feared that he cut his throat.

Under these circumstances I wrote to the Mayor on September 10th that—

> "For the future, no member of the Amalgamated Society of Street and Electrical Railway Employees of the United States of America will be employed on any of the lines over which I have jurisdriction. I say this with regret because it sounds arbitrary and unfeeling but that society has proved itself in my judgment to be a humbug. Its contract is not good; it does not account for the moneys it collects; it is of no benefit to the men who belong to it, except the few who are officers; it promotes disorder and disloyalty; and it is rapidly becoming a public nuisance. I will have no dealings with it, or anybody representing it, until after such time as it is incorporated under the laws of New York, and the supervision of its accounts, like those of the railways, is placed under the Public Service Commission. That will at least secure publicity."

What I have said in this letter to the Mayor is still true.

F. W. WHITRIDGE, President.

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